



Community Guidelines for Equitable Shelter Siting

Executive Summary

Purpose:

In 2021, Washington County began implementing the regional Supportive Housing Services measure. This funding dramatically improved the ability for local government to reduce homelessness. In combination with funding provided by Governor Kotek's EO-02, Washington County has stood up over 400 shelter beds/rooms across our community.

To implement these measures and respond to the frequent requests from our community to address unsheltered homelessness, providing shelters county-wide is crucial. While there is public support for creating new shelters to address homelessness, there is often significant community concern from neighborhoods when a specific site is identified.

To address these concerns and identify specific local community needs, Washington County developed the "Community Guidelines for Equitable Shelter Siting" after a lengthy community engagement process in 2022. This document outlines these guidelines which include the considerations staff use in siting shelter locations, programmatic needs in shelters, and the community engagement process that takes place on a neighborhood level once a site is selected.

Shelter Location Guidelines

When evaluating potential shelter sites, Washington County utilizes these specific guidelines which consider many different factors, including:

- Logistical constraints such as location size, condition of the property, utilities,
- Access to transportation,
- Access to services, employment, and community resources,
- Geographic and demographic distribution,
- Impact on local communities or public services (schools, playgrounds, or public parks).

All considerations overlay a backdrop of tremendous need for shelter in Washington County. A top priority of our community guidelines was and remains to, "Address unmet needs in the community." While individual sites may not meet every consideration listed in the bullets above, staff prioritize moving forward with sites that provide a viable option to support people with "acute and long-term needs and those impacted by disproportionate outcomes" to ensure we have as many options as possible to continue connecting people experiencing homelessness with housing options.

Shelter Program Guidelines



When developing equitable shelter programs, the following are best practices identified during the “Community Guidelines for Equitable Shelter Siting” process:

- **Strong program management** including 24/7 staffing, an experienced shelter operator with extensive training and management support,
- **Diverse shelter system options** with various shelter models and locations to meet various needs including alternative shelter options (such as pod villages), congregate shelter (shared space), and motel options,
- **Services available onsite** including hygiene facilities, nutrition, storage for belongings, and case management. We also identified the need for more culturally specific services to remove barriers to resources Black, Indigenous, Latine, Asian/Pacific Islander, immigrant and refugee communities,
- **Shelter and community safety** addressed to ensure shelter participants feel safe engaging with services and safety in the surrounding community is not impacted by the presence of the shelter, and
- **Promote community livability** through regular trash removal, maintenance of property, and programs that manage neighborhood cleanliness.

Community Engagement Guidelines

When a site is determined for a future shelter program, based on the considerations above, Washington County staff conduct a lengthy community engagement process to inform the surrounding community with transparent and clear information, engage the local community to understand opportunities to improve the program, and connect with local neighbors to ensure lines of communication with the shelter staff as needed throughout the program. Below, are the engagement steps conducted with the local community:



The current process also involves research on neighborhood demographics to determine what culturally specific engagement tools are needed and how best to integrate the shelter with the surrounding community.



This community engagement process has evolved since the “Community Guidelines for Equitable Shelter Siting” were first adopted by the Board to spell out the process for developing a Neighborhood Plan (formerly referred to as a Good Neighbor Agreement or Community Agreements).

Neighborhood Plan Guidelines

Feedback received in these community engagement process’ is foundational to the content and considerations that are included in a neighborhood plan. Feedback received from community members that would be incorporated into a neighborhood plan often include ideas about:

- public safety,
- neighborhood cleanliness,
- site design, and
- the code of conduct that program participants follow.

Washington County and its respective service providers work together to support and uphold the commitments listed in these neighborhood plans to respect the private property around these shelter sites and the people that reside/work in them.

Policy Precedent

[State legislation](#) enables the “super siting of shelter programs in residential and commercial zones, without standard land use review” to allow for the expedient siting of shelters to address a state-wide crisis. This means as long as shelter locations meet basic criteria, they cannot be disallowed through land use review.

To learn more:

For further information regarding the Community Guidelines for Expanding Shelter Programs (2022) see link below:

[Washington County Community Guidelines: Expanding Shelter Programs with Equity.pdf \(washingtoncountyor.gov\)](#)